



## **Alternative Response**

**Partnering with Families to Safely Care for Children  
In Their Own Homes and Communities**

A Children and Family Services Specialist (CFS), has contacted you because a concern about your child(ren) was reported to the Nebraska Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline. The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) wants to work with you to keep your child(ren) safe in their home, community and school by connecting your family with supports and services to meet your family's needs. Your family has been determined eligible to receive an Alternative Response.

### **How can Alternative Response help my family?**

Alternative Response can help families:

- Struggling with the day to day demands of parenting children
- Improve family relationships
- Increase parenting knowledge of children of all ages
- Increase your ability to work through times of family stress
- Connect with local community resources
- Find solutions in times of need or crisis
- Identify resources for children who may be experiencing education, medical or behavioral challenges

### **How does an Alternative Response (AR) work?**

A CFS Specialist will meet with you and your family to:

- Talk about the safety of your children.
- Find solutions to family concerns without labels of victim or perpetrator of child abuse and neglect, and assist you with connecting to community supports and services that meet your basic needs, for example: housing, medical and mental health services, food programs and transportation challenges.
- If your child/children's safety is compromised, the CFS Specialist (CFSS) will review the concerns with you and inform you of the need to change the assessment to a Traditional Response/Investigation. The Division of Children and Family Services is required by law to assess child safety.

### **How does a Traditional Response (TR) work?**

- A CFS Specialist will meet with you to talk about safety and the needs of your family.
- A Traditional Response is an investigation often completed with Law Enforcement.
- The investigation is completed to determine if a child has been abused or neglected.
- A CFS Specialist will assist you with connecting to community supports and services to meet basic needs when needed.
- Names are placed on the central registry when child abuse and/or neglect is substantiated, and may affect future employment with children or vulnerable adults.

**What are my choices?**

- You can choose to engage in an Alternative Response or you can choose a Traditional Response/Investigation.
- You may request a meeting with your worker or supervisor at any time to review family needs and services.
- You may choose to accept or decline supports and/or services for your family.

**What are my rights in Alternative Response?**

The Division of Children and Family Services is required by law to assess child safety; therefore your case may result in a reassignment to the traditional response track. In any case, if there is sufficient cause to believe that the child/children are not safe, the CFSS may contact law enforcement for assistance or contact the county attorney to seek a court order if children are unsafe.

You have the right:

- To be notified that a report of suspected child abuse or neglect has been made against you.
- To refuse entry into your home by the Children and Family Services Specialist.
- To an attorney to represent you at any point during the investigation. If there is not an open court case, you are responsible for the cost of an attorney.
- To make a report of concern to the Inspector General.  
Office of the Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 94604  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604  
oig@leg.ne.gov  
In Lincoln - 402-471-4211  
Toll Free - 855-460-6784
- To make a report of concern to DHHS if you are not in agreement with your CFS Specialist regarding family case and service decisions.

You know what your family needs. The CFS Specialist will work with you to determine if your family could benefit from services or supports to lower the risk of future child abuse and neglect. Your CFS Specialist will help your family work through challenges. Families receiving an Alternative Response will generally work with DCFS for approximately 45-90 days. Together we will work to build your skills and connection to the community to keep your children safely in your care.

Please call the following DCFS representative to discuss the report, answer questions, and discuss your family's need for services and support:

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Children and Family Services Specialist

At:

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(Address and Telephone)

Department of Health and Human Services